exemption/benefit U/S 88 upon PRBS scheme with reference to ONGC's office order No. ll(23)/97-EP dated 6th August, 1998;

(c) whether such deduction from employees by ONGC without written consent of individual towards funding in PRBS can attract aforesaid tax benefit;

(d) whether Government will cancel tax benefit on the said scheme in view of Association complaint'dated 4th August, 99; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) No, Sir. However, the Central Board of Direct Taxes had earlier received a complaint from ONGC Employees Association, Calcutta *vide* letter No. 106/PRBS/ 98, dated 10-9-98, against PRBS Scheme with a request for it's cancellation in view of the fact that the PRBS Scheme is not a statutory scheme of the Government of India.

(b) Commissioner of Income-tax, Meerut granted recognition to the ONGC Self Contributory Post Retirement and death in service Superannuation Benefit Trust, Dehradun *vide* order dated 5-12-1991 under section 88 of the Income-tax Act,. 1961.

(c) All contribution to any hitherto recognized funds like the PRBS Scheme arc eligible for deduction under section 88(2)(vii) of the Income-tax Act, 1961.

(d) and (e) In view of the earlier complaint, dated 10-9-98, proceedings regarding cencellation of the recognition granted to the Trust on 5-12-1991 have already been initiated by the Commissioner of Income-tax, Meerut.

Depreciation rates under Income Tax Act

542. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to free depreciation rates under Income Tax Act;

(b) if not, whether Government are aware that by not doing so the

latest technology will not be introduced for a long time in different sectors;

(c) whether Government are aware that in the fast changing world of new technologies specially in electronics and computers etc. full depreciation has to be given in a short period or else Indian entrepreneurs will be left behind;

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to tackle the situation; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) The Government considers various aspects of Direct Tax provisions as part of annual Budget Exercise. The Government's response, if any, in this regard will be contained in the annual Budget Proposals for the year 2000-2001.

(b) to (e) In view of the above, answers to parts (b), (c), (d) and (e) do not arise.

Exemption to Pondicherry from Uniform Sales Tax

543. SHRI C. P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would exempt Union Territory of Pondicherry from "Uniform Sales Tax", since Pondicherry is mainly depending on income from Sales Tax; and

(b) if not, whether there is any proposal to give financial assistance to Pondicherry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR): (a) Sir, no such proposal is under consideration.

(b) Pondicheny being a Union Territory gets its total financial requiretnents from the Government of India.